

2005, 15 million registered voters will go to the polls to choose their first permanently elected government in modern Iraqi history. Along with them, Iraqis from all around the world will cast their votes for freedom, for Iraq's future—including Iraqi Kurds in my home town of Nashville, Tennessee.

As it so happens, Nashville is home to the largest Kurdish population in the United States of approximately 8,000 Iraqi expats. This past January, over 3,000 of our Kurdish neighbors voted in the historic January 30 elections which put Iraq on the road to independent, democratic self-rule. Tennessee election organizers predict that the turnout for today's vote will be double that number.

Iraqis from all around the region are converging on Nashville to cast their votes in solidarity with their brothers and sisters of their native land.

Susan Dakak, whose family moved from Baghdad to Tennessee 27 years ago, tells the Chattanooga Times Free Press, "This is a dream come true. I never thought in my life that Iraq would get to where it is politically."

Susan and her husband, Janan, plan to travel from Knoxville to Nashville, and they plan to bring their 9-year-old son with them to witness the personal and historic moment of casting their ballots as free citizens. And as Susan understands, her vote is not just for her birth country, but for her adopted country, as well.

Susan and Janan's votes, along with the millions of Iraqis voting today, are critical to helping defeat the terrorists and vanquishing their violent aspirations.

As Susan explains:

This will be the beginning of the end of all of the violence. The new Iraqi government will know that it will be their responsibility to clear the terrorists out of the country.

In the short run, today's broad participation will further isolate the terrorists and constructively engage Iraqis across ethnic and sectarian lines. And in the long run, a peaceful, united, stable and secure democracy in the heart of the Middle East will expose the brittle and intolerable tyranny of the terrorist enemy. And it is precisely this outcome that our terrorist enemies fear.

Early in the conflict, a letter from Al Zarqawi was intercepted by coalition forces. In it, he wrote that a free and prosperous Iraq would reject his vision of a medieval, fundamentalist state. He recognized that if Iraqis became accustomed to self-determination and self-rule, they would refuse to submit to a tyrant and they would reject his extreme interpretation of Islam.

Furthermore, Iraq would become a model for the entire Middle East region, driving out extremism and heralding in moderation and peace. Al Zarqawi understands the power of freedom. That is why he is bent on its destruction. But as this remarkable year of steady progress has proven, he cannot and will not succeed. The desire of

freedom is too strong and its logic is too irreducible.

Democracy is on the march and today 15 million Iraqis are heading to the polls. Once again, they are showing the world their extraordinary courage and determination to join the modern, free world.

America pledges to stand with the Iraqi people in that worthy effort as they strive to secure the blessings of liberty.

As Tahir Hussain, president of the Nashville Kurdish Forum, told a Tennessee paper on this week:

We say that everybody should have a voice in Iraq, and everybody should be equal. And today is the day.

SENATOR EUGENE MCCARTHY: A GREAT AMERICAN HAS PASSED AWAY

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, in my book, "Child of the Appalachian Coal Fields," I discussed the Senate class of 1958. That class, which included 15 Democrats and 3 Republicans, constituted the largest turnover over in Senate history, and from that class of Senators came a number of Senate leaders and Presidential candidates. Most important, I pointed out, while elected during the Eisenhower administration, the class of 1958 "tackled some of the greatest foreign and domestic problems ever to face the Nation, and they played critical roles in enacting the Great Society programs and ending the war in Vietnam."

One of the most remarkable members of that remarkable class was Senator Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota, who passed away this weekend. He played critical roles both in enacting the Great Society programs and ending the war in Vietnam.

It was my privilege and my pleasure to serve with Eugene McCarthy in the U.S. House of Representatives and here in the Senate as members of the class of 1958.

While serving together, I came to appreciate that Senator McCarthy was a truly gifted and talented person with an extraordinary background. He was, without question, one of the more unusual Members to sit in this chamber. He was a poet, professor, philosopher, and author, and had been a military intelligence official during World War II and a semiprofessional baseball player.

In the Senate, as throughout his life, Senator McCarthy did not hesitate to go his own way. He did not hesitate to stomp out of a Senate hearing, and he was willing to espouse unpopular views. But he always did so with an open heart, an open mind, and deep sincerity and dedication. Therefore, even when I disagreed with him, which was quite often in those early years, my respect for him continued to increase.

And I developed a deep appreciation for his abilities, his wit, his warm personality, and his strong determination to make ours a better country. One of his first assignments in the Senate was

chairing the Select Committee on Unemployment, which helped focus national attention on the problems of joblessness and poverty throughout the country. By holding hearings in Beckley, Welch, Fayetteville, and Wheeling, WV, as well as other economically distressed regions of the country, the Select Committee helped undermine the false claims of the so-called Republican prosperity of the 1950s, and, as a result, helped provide the ground work for the Great Society legislation that came a few years later.

As I said earlier, it was members of the class of 1958 who also helped to end the war in Vietnam. Although all of us had voted for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, many of us came to regret it. Senator McCarthy, to his great credit, was one of the first to speak out against the war. He did so by announcing his break with the Johnson administration, and running against the President for the Democratic presidential nomination. "The Administration," he said, "seems to have set no limit to the price which it is willing to pay for a military victory."

No one expected much from McCarthy's challenge. He was a little-known Senator taking on President Johnson, who at the time, seemed all powerful.

But, as most of us know, in the 1968 New Hampshire Democratic primary, Senator McCarthy stunned the Nation and shocked the political world. His near victory helped to drive President Johnson out of the Presidential race. That contest showed how unpopular the war was. It focused attention on, despite the administration's claims to the contrary, just how disastrous its policies were in Southeast Asia. It brought home to the American people an issue that was dividing the country and costing billions of dollars and thousands of American lives. Furthermore, Senator McCarthy's campaign helped embolden a generation of young Democratic Party activists.

When Senator McCarthy announced that he would be leaving the Senate in 1970, I was one Senator who approached him and tried to change his mind. When I was unsuccessful, I came to the Senate Floor to pay tribute to him. Senator McCarthy, I said, "has made his mark upon our party, he has made his mark upon our country, and he has made an indelible mark upon the hearts of all in the Senate who are privileged to call him friend." I said, "he proves the truth of that verse of Scripture that states, 'He that hath friends must show himself friendly.'"

I have never wavered in those opinions that I expressed 35 years ago. In fact, our friendship became stronger, as did my admiration of him.

Mr. President, our country has lost a good and talented man, and a great American. I will miss my friend. Our country needs more men like him.

God give us men!
A time like this demands strong minds,
great hearts, true faith, and ready hands.

Men whom the lust of office does not kill;
Men whom the spoils of office cannot buy;
Men who possess opinions and a will;
Men who have honor; men who will not lie.
Men who can stand before a demagogue
And brave his treacherous flatteries without
winking.

Tall men, sun-crowned;
Who live above the fog,
In public duty and in private thinking.
For while the rabble with its thumbworn
creeds,

It's large professions and its little deeds,
mingles in selfish strife,
Lo! Freedom weeps!
Wrong rules the land and waiting justice
sleeps.

God give us men!

Men who serve not for selfish booty;
But real men, courageous, who flinch not at
duty.

Men of dependable character;
Men of sterling worth;
Then wrongs will be redressed, and right will
rule the earth.

God Give us men!

WEAK-KNEED BUDGET TRICKS

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, before we adjourn, the Congress will be asked to vote on an across-the-board cut for every agency and program in the Federal Government. The Congressional majorities have put this Nation on an irresponsible fiscal path, one that promises years of record-breaking red ink, inflationary pressures, and multiplying Federal debts. Instead of making tough choices on spending priorities, or perhaps limiting the massive tax breaks going to Nation's richest citizens, or finding ways to lessen the burden of the war in Iraq on the American citizens, the Republican Congressional leadership is expected to take the expedient route of an across-the-board funding cut.

This may not seem like a big deal. What's 1 or 2 percent? But to the families across this country, that 1 or 2 percent can mean a world of difference, especially when it is coupled with the freeze in services that has already been applied to Federal initiatives.

Take, for an example, community health centers which provide basic health care for some of our most isolated citizens. This arbitrary Republican plan would mean that 55 clinics would be shuttered, and 73,000 Americans would see their health care held hostage by budget games. A 2 percent cut in the Food and Drug Administration budget would force unacceptable delays in the amount of time that it takes to approve new lifesaving drug and medical devices.

At a time when the Congress is considering tax cuts for the wealthy, after a 2 percent cut, food packages for 65,922 elderly participants would vanish. A 2 percent cut in the WIC program would reduce the number of meals for 175,234 economically struggling women, infants, and children. More than 35,000 families would lose access to safe and affordable housing. Under this Congressional leadership, the rich get richer, while tens of thousands of poor and the

elderly have to struggle for food and shelter.

The House has passed four tax cut bills, totaling \$95 billion, and the Senate has passed tax cuts which add up to \$58 billion. The vast majority of these tax cuts are aimed at improving the economic portfolios of the wealthiest Americans at the expense of those Americans who are barely scraping by. At the same time that this Congress is pushing forward with unwise tax cuts, these across-the-board cuts would weaken further the Nation's crumbling infrastructure and rob the economy of new jobs. In fact, a \$720 million cut in highway construction, as put forward under the Republican blueprint, would slash more than 34,200 construction jobs from our economy. How many headlines about companies cutting payrolls by the tens of thousands will it take before this Congress stands up and puts the American people first? American families deserve to know that the safety net is not filled with holes. But instead of offering assurances, this Republican plan only serves to jeopardize the future of many Americans.

Children in school districts with a high median income would also suffer. These school districts, which receive title I funding, would have to scramble to fill a \$257 million reduction. That kind of cut would hamstring the education of more than 200,000 students around the country. At the same time, special education funding would drop by \$214 million, and the number of children in Head Start would be cut by 19,000. Cutting the funds for classroom education may achieve short-term fiscal goals for the Republican majority, but it creates long-term problems for the Nation's future.

Don't care about the classrooms? Think that school districts can absorb this cut with higher property taxes? Then what about our veterans? Each day, new veterans come home from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They join our proud men and women who have served in World War One and World War Two, in Korea, in Vietnam, in the first Gulf War, and in so many places around the world. These men and women have made us proud. Many of these 21st century veterans have specialized health care needs. The battlefields of today are inflicting wounds unlike those experienced by the soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines of past wars. Veterans' health care is a responsibility that we must never shirk.

But what do these veterans get in return for their service? More budget cuts from this Congressional majority. The GOP plan means cuts in treatment for approximately 236,000 patients. It means that 1.4 million outpatient visits would disappear. Waiting lists would likely rise by about 176,000 veterans. In addition, the VA will not be able to expand specialty and mental health services at existing sites as planned.

But the short-sighted effects of this Republican cut to America's working families, classrooms, and veterans are only one aspect of backwards priorities of this Republican funding plan. Just this week, the President reiterated his effort to protect the American people from future terrorist attacks. But how much safer will the American people be if the Republican blueprint for budget cuts is signed into law? How much safer will the Nation be with 800 fewer FBI agents?

Similar cuts would face the Drug Enforcement Agency. Under this Republican scheme, the DEA would be forced to cut its planned force by 200 agents. The President and his team have stated that drug profits contribute to terrorism. Does anyone think that it is a good idea to cut more than 200 agents from the DEA?

Border Security would be cut by \$96.5 million. As a result, 200 of the promised new border agents would go unhired. Detention and removal efforts for illegal aliens would be sliced by \$20 million. All of us know that the U.S.-Mexico border already is terribly porous. But, instead of investing in new agents and tightening security on our borders, this Republican effort would undermine our effort to secure our borders.

What about our airport security? That is not immune from these Republican budget games. The Transportation Security Administration, which is responsible for the screening of passengers at our airports, would also be targeted for stiff reductions. As a result of this misguided GOP blueprint, more than 1,000 TSA screeners would lose their jobs. This is on top of the 2,000 person reduction in screeners already approved by this Congress. At the same time, funding for explosive detection equipment for baggage and passengers would be decreased by \$12 million. And safety in the skies would be placed at risk.

We all watched the Coast Guard perform marvelously after Hurricane Katrina devastated Mississippi and Louisiana. But rather than reinforcing the Coast Guard's ability in future disasters, the 2 percent rollback would reduce cutter patrol hours by at least 10,000 hours and aircraft hours by at least 2,000 hours. And military recruiting would be reduced by 60 percent—or 1,158 Coast Guard personnel.

I urge my colleagues to think again about this fiscal foolishness. Think about what it means for our children and for the safety of our families. Think about what it means for our veterans and for our security.

The American people elect Members of Congress to lead, to make tough choices, and to place the best interests of the Nation at the forefront of our work. This across-the-board cut is not leadership, and it is not in the best interests of the Nation.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Ms. SNOWE. Mr. President, as chair of the Senate Committee on Small